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CONSERVATION DISTRICTS WORKING FOR YOU

PLEASE RETURN

CONSERVATION DISTRICTS ARE . . .

Conservation districts (CDs) are a part of your local government. They work the same way your school district or your county commission does, with and for the people through locally elected officials.

Montana's CDs have been working since the Dust Bowl days of the 1930s to promote the wise use, conservation, and development of our soil, water, and related natural resources. CDs give expert assistance in natural resource use and planning and they initiate and carry out community-wide, resource-based programs with private landowners.

To conserve our natural resources, CDs work to prevent soil erosion; they promote the conservation, development, use and disposal of water; help control flooding; relieve sedimentation of dams and reservoirs; preserve wildlife habitat; improve rangeland; and conduct public conservation education programs.

Conservation districts are the local organizations through which state and federal agencies provide services to private landowners. CDs receive assistance from numerous state and federal agencies, notably the USDA, Soil Conservation Service (SCS).

At the state level, the Conservation Districts Division, Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, coordinates CD activities, provides financial and legal assistance, and keeps the public informed of current programs offered through the conservation districts.

WHAT ARE CONSERVATION DISTRICTS DOING FOR ME?

On the Farm and Ranch . . .

Petroleum CD supervisors are drafting a land use ordinance (subject to voter approval) designed to eliminate the plowing of marginal lands in their district.

CDs help landowners develop **conservation plans** which include grazing and cropping systems, irrigation management, weed control, range improvements, and stockwater developments.

CDs supply **soil surveys** for sound resource management planning.

CDs provide specialized **equipment** such as no-till drills, tree planters, and hand seeders to landowners.

CDs assist local landowners in obtaining **low interest loans** for **rangeland** improvements through the Montana Rangeland Resource Pro-

gram administered by the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation. Eligible projects include reseeding of rangeland, fencing, stock-water development, establishment of grazing systems, wildlife habitat improvements, weed control, and mechanical rangeland renovation. Rosebud CD now has a no-interest loan program for conservation practices within the district.

Fourteen CDs in the Yellowstone River Basin have **reserved water** for future beneficial use and are currently developing irrigation projects with this water.

The Cascade and Teton County CDs are working together to **reduce erosion and siltation** in Muddy Creek, a major tributary of the Sun River. This project will improve irrigation efficiency on the Fairfield Bench near Great Falls.

The Triangle Conservation District, composed of 11 CDs, continues to assist farmers in establishing crop management systems for **control of saline seep**.

CDs assist farmers to establish shelterbelts and windbreaks to reduce wind erosion and cut down on wind and drifting snow around farmsteads.

Montana's CDs are working to develop a statewide weed control program.

CD personnel review local, state and federal **land use** plans on behalf of district residents.

CDs own and help operate the Bridger Plant Materials Center which develops and tests **improved plant varieties** for rangeland, pasture and conservation uses.

CDs work with county weed boards and other agencies to develop and implement effective **weed control** policies.

CDs receive grants through Montana's HB 223 program to carry out conservation projects for the public benefit.

CDs sponsor **educational tours** to share information on range management, irrigation and cropping methods, weed control, and many other issues affecting local landowners.

CDs help protect landowners from **streambank erosion** and **flooding** by administering the Natural Streambed and Land Preservation Act (SB 310), which requires that a permit be secured for any project that will affect a perennial stream. A number of CDs are involved in riparian management projects.

CDs have helped **reduce nonpoint pollution** from agricultural lands by participating in the Federal Nonpoint Pollution and Water Quality Control Act (Section 208) with the Environmental Protection Agency, the Montana Department of Health and Environmental Sciences, and the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation.

CDs work with the SCS to administer the **Great Plains Conservation Program**, designed to facilitate the application of long-term conservation practices within the semi-arid Great Plains.

CDs took part in a nation-wide **assessment of soil, water, and related resources** mandated by the 1977 Soil and Water Resources Conservation Act. This effort resulted in a national program for soil and water conservation which emphasizes the targeting of technical and financial assistance to critical resource problem areas.

LEGISLATION . . .

Conservation districts are represented by the Montana Association of Conservation Districts (MACD) and the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD). These organizations keep the CDs informed of legislation affecting them and lobby to further the conservation and development of our soil, water, and related resources. These organizations also distribute educational materials to CDs.

IN OUR FORESTS . . .

CDs work with private, state, and federal foresters to coordinate planning and provide for soil and water conservation. The Lewis and Clark CD, for example, has passed a **sediment control ordinance** which requires conservation planning for logging operations. Proper planning limits the degradation of important watersheds.

CDs provide soil surveys to facilitate the planning of road construction and revegetation of disturbed areas.

The Cascade CD is working with the State Forester's office to promote **private forestry** while maintaining a firewood supply for the city of Great Falls.

The Rosebud CD has provided information to Forsyth residents on **tree plantings** around urban homes.

IN OUR CITIES AND TOWNS . . .

CDs provide soil surveys needed for sound land use planning. Soils information is essential for building location, septic tank design, road construction and design, erosion control measures, gardening, property purchases, and many other activities.

CD supervisors serve on city-county planning boards to **represent conservation interests**. For example, the Missoula CD works with the planning board on weed control in subdivisions, and the Lewis and Clark CD gives recommendations on subdivision design to the planning board.

CDs have the authority to enact, with public approval, land use ordinances that specify measures for erosion control and water quality protection.

CDs participate in programs to **improve water quality** for household, industrial, and recreational use. The Muddy Creek Water Quality Project (Cascade CD), for example, will improve the municipal water supply for Great Falls and result in higher recreation values in the Missouri and Sun rivers. Flathead CD officials served on the

201 Wastewater Committee for the Kalispell-Evergreen area, and the Yellowstone CD is addressing storm water runoff in Billings.

CDs give **technical assistance to municipalities** for flood control and streambank stabilization. The administration of the "310 Law" allows CDs to offer valuable information to landowners for streambank protection. Several CDs, including Flathead and Missoula County CDs, are investigating acceptable methods of agricultural land preservation around expanding urban areas.

IN THE FIELD OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION . . .

CDs supply **conservation education materials** and give presentations to schools; sponsor teacher environmental education workshops, student speech contests, "conservation teacher-of-the-year" programs, and Arbor Day activities; and develop outdoor classrooms.

CDs award **scholarships** for young people to attend Montana Youth Range Camp, Montana Range Days, 4-H Conservation Camps, and other conservation events.

CDs assist Vo-Ag, FFA, 4-H and other students in soil and range judging, career days, science fairs, and other activities.

CDs distribute **Soil Stewardship materials** to churches during May each year, and offer conservation information at county fairs and civic organization meetings.

CDs publish newsletters and newspaper articles on conservation issues and programs, and sponsor public service announcements on radio and television.

Your conservation districts are hard at work to protect your soil, water, and other natural resources. To find out how you can benefit—contact your local conservation district.